

The Olivet Discourse – the Lord Talks About the End Times

Mark 13:1-13

Mark 13:1-13 – *“Then as He went out of the Temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!”* ² *And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”*

³ *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”* ⁵ *And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many. ⁷ But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.*

⁹ *“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”*

Background Notes

This sermon is called the “Olivet Discourse” for obvious reasons: the Lord gave it on the Mount of Olives. The Olivet Discourse is also found in Matthew 24-25 and Luke 21. This talk was given during the final week of our Lord’s earthly ministry, probably on the Tuesday.

As the Lord and His disciples were leaving the Temple area, the disciples remarked about the beautiful Temple, and the great stones of the Temple complex. The Temple at that time is known as the “Second Temple,” or “Herod’s Temple.” Herod the Great began major repairs and additions to the older Temple complex in 20BC. The work wasn’t finished until 64 AD, and six years later the Temple was destroyed. So the work was going on even while the Lord was giving the Olivet Discourse. For the Temple platform, Herod used huge limestone blocks. The huge blocks that form the Temple platform are still standing today - in fact, one of those stones is calculated to be over 400 tons! The Temple itself was covered with white polished marble, and the roof was gilded with gold. The Jewish historian Josephus says the Temple stood over 100 feet high! It was one of the Wonders of the Ancient World.

In verse 2 the Lord predicted that **not one stone** of that beautiful Temple would be left upon another. They would all be thrown down. This prophecy was fulfilled in 70AD when the Roman armies under Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple – they burned and tore Temple down – only the platform on which the Temple had been built remained. After making this prediction, the Lord and His disciples crossed the Kidron Valley and climbed the Mount of Olives. From there they could look back across the valley and view the Temple Mount with all of its buildings and walls. And it's here that our Lord gave His Olivet Discourse about the future.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Olivet Discourse looks forward to two future events.

What are these two events? The first event was the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. The other event was the future return of the Lord. The Lord's prediction of the destruction of the Temple got the disciples started thinking about End-Time events, because they associated this event—the destruction of the Temple—with the End Times and the ushering in of the Messianic Age. In fact, in Matthew 24:3 we see that the disciples definitely were thinking of the end times because they asked, *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?"*

In the Olivet Discourse the Lord showed that the destruction of the Temple would not be the End of Time, but it does foreshadow End-Time events. In Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse, End-Time events are especially in view. In Luke 21 our Lord concentrated on the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Luke 21:20-24: *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* All of these predictions were fulfilled in 70 AD when the Temple was destroyed, but the "times of the Gentiles" still go on. The "times of the Gentiles" will end then when our Lord returns.

The fact that our Lord's Olivet Discourse looks forward to the return of the Lord is clearly seen here in Mark 13:26-27: *"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the earth to the farthest part of Heaven."* At that point "the times of the Gentiles" will come to an end. So we see in all of the accounts (Matthew, Mark and Luke), is that the Olivet Discourse looks forward to **two** future events— the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, and also foreshadowing of the return of the Lord.

2. The Olivet Discourse answers two questions about the End Times.

Notice in verse 4 the disciples asked two questions: *“What will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”* That’s one question. And they also asked, *“When will these things be?”* The Lord answered both questions in the Olivet Discourse. He answered the question about the signs first, and then He answered their question about the when, beginning in verse 28. In verses 1-13, the Lord told them what the signs are **not**. Then beginning in verse 14 He tells them what the signs **are**, and we’ll see that in our next Talk.

As to what the signs are **not**, look at verse 6: *“Many will come in My name, saying ‘I am He,’ and will deceive many.”* You can expect many false Messiahs - that’s not the sign. You can expect wars and rumors of wars - those are not the signs. Those things must take place, but that’s not the end. Earthquakes and famines – those things are not the signs. They are merely the *beginning* of sorrows, or the birth pangs of the Messianic Age. Verses 9-13 tell us that there will be persecutions, floggings, legal threats, arrests, imprisonments, and family betrayals - but these are not the signs of the end time. These things will go on throughout history, right up to and into the End Times. And throughout all these times the Gospel will be preached (v10). So these events are **not** the signs of the end times. They will be happen on all along. Jewish believers are particularly in view here. The hard times that are mentioned here actually begin in the book of Acts. Even though Jewish believers are particularly in view here, these verses certainly can be applied to all believers.

Verse 11 says, *“don’t think ahead of time or premeditate what you will speak. It will be given to you in that hour.”* This verse has sometimes been misused to mean that you don’t have to prepare for sermons, or you don’t have to prepare your Sunday School lessons or Bible study lectures, because the Lord will give you the words to say. No! The teaching here is that in times of persecution, and times when you don’t have time to prepare a defense of your faith, in those times the Lord definitely will come alongside and give you the right words to say.

Perseverance is the idea in verse 13, where the word **endure** is used—*“he who endures to the end.”* We don’t always know who is a believer and who isn’t, but a sure sign of salvation is an overall life of loyalty to the Lord - all the way through to the end.

Practical Applications

1. Let’s not be sidetracked by buildings.

Look again at verse 1. The disciples were impressed with the beautiful Temple and its associated buildings, and they said to the Lord, *“Look, Lord, look at the buildings here. Aren’t they magnificent?”* The Lord essentially said, “Don’t be impressed with buildings! Buildings are temporal. God’s program and God’s people are what really matter.”

Now in a practical way let’s ask ourselves, “Did you select your church because it was an impressive building, or did you choose your church because you wanted to worship with a group of the Lord’s people who truly love God and honor the name of Christ? Regardless of the appearance of the building!”

Another question: Are you more interested in the building program of your church - or in the spiritual growth of the people in your fellowship? Buildings and building programs certainly have their place, but let's not be *sidetracked* by buildings!

2. Let's not be misled by "date-setters."

There have been a lot of date-setters recently - and they've all been wrong! Many Christians were misled by the book *88 Reasons Why the Lord Will Return in 1988*. That date-setter was certainly wrong! More recent date-setters have all been wrong, too!

Let's not be misled by date-setters. That's our Lord's main point in this section of the Olivet Discourse. Verse 5: "*Take heed that no one deceives you.*" Don't be misled! Our main concern right now should be to get the Gospel out. The Great Commission didn't say anything about setting dates! No - it commanded us to preach the Gospel around the world! Thus in verse 10 the Lord said, "*This gospel **must** be preached to all nations.*" *That* is of utmost importance!

Don't be misled and deceived by so-called "signs" (which are not really signs) that the end has arrived. Our Lord wanted to emphasize that the gospel **must** be preached, and **will** be preached, to all nations - in spite of false messiahs, in spite of wars and rumors of wars, in spite of earthquakes, or famines, or persecutions, or betrayals.

The spread of the gospel should be our main concern, so let's not be *misled* and *sidetracked* by "signs" or date setting.

Let's continue to preach the Gospel.